

## **UK Sikh Healthcare Chaplaincy – Guidance for Sikh Chaplains and families during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

This guidance is written to help support our collective efforts as a community during this time and to update chaplains on how best to respond to situations that might arise.

### **Statement on the current Covid-19 situation**

These are unprecedented times. None of us have seen times like these. As Sikhs, we need to ensure we remain positive, support patient, staff and families as well as pray for “Sarbat da Bhalla”. Never before have these words from our Guru meant so much. It is our duty as Sikhs to act for the wellbeing of humanity, and pray for those who are suffering to be healed. We will get through this, and we will all have a role to play in rebuilding our communities and supporting those who have suffered. Be that from the direct loss of a loved one or from the strain on individual’s mental health brought on by self-isolation and financial pressures. The role of chaplains in supporting our community is important right now and will be of greater importance in the months to come. To all of you, we pray that you have the strength to do the important work that is needed.

On one final note, we leave you with this clip of doctors at the Alcorcón Madrid Hospital (Spain) meditating on "Ek Ong Kaar Sat Nam Siri Waheguru"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ghr8glaDX4I>

May we all find the strength we need at this time.  
Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh.

### **Supporting patients directly who are confirmed or suspected of Covid-19**

Where Chaplains are visiting patients, it is important to maintain essential infection control measures to minimise risk. Some helpful steps include:

- Chaplains will follow the advice of nursing staff regarding whether they may or must not enter the room with the patient.
- Chaplains will wear the PPE (and/or scrubs) as advised by clinical staff, and ask for their support in correctly fitting them.
- Items should not be given to patients nor received from them.
- Where the chaplain is not able to enter the room, it is important to explore if there are other ways in prayers and support may be offered such as reciting prayers to a patient over speakerphone facilitated by ward Staff.

### **Supporting families and individuals at this time with those with Covid-19**

For those families with individuals who might be suffering from Covid-19 chaplains should provide as much support as possible as they can via the safest channels, be that video conferencing or via the telephone. It is essential to maintain all social distancing and infection control protocols throughout our work.

Chaplains are advised to support families by providing:

- Advice to families on what prayers to recite and Simran.
- Ardaas to support the recovery of those with symptoms.
- Ardaas to support the families of those suffering with symptoms given the high levels of stress they may be under.
- Ensuring they reiterate Guidance where appropriate that regular contact with medical professionals, NHS 111 to ensure they are receiving the support they need.

## **Supporting families with bereavement at this time**

Given the restrictions imposed by Government these will be unique times for our faith and how we deal with those who have passed away. The government has set out clear guidance on how funerals can take place, and for families who might need to self-isolate due to Covid-19 at this period. Chaplains should be as supportive as possible reminding families that relatives who have passed away are children of God and entrusted to Waheguru's Hukham. Whilst circumstances mean certain religious rights and duties might not be able to take place, they will still be treated equally by God at this time. Chaplains should pay special attention to the following:

- Supporting families through the grieving process, especially given that is likely they will not be present when a family member passes away.
- Supporting them with advice about when best to undertake the Paath and Bhog associated with the funeral given that places of worship are currently closed.
- Letting them know of the government guidelines with regards to the funeral.
- Funerals can only have a small number of family members in attendance, and with some Gurdwaras currently closed families may need to postpone prayers. Chaplains need to give support and counsel to families to let them know that this is ok and that their loved ones will still be given respect and dignity.

## **Supporting families and individuals with anxiety, stress and mental health issues**

There is no doubt this crisis will cause many issues for families in relation to mental health, anxiety and stress. These effects and the rebuilding of these families will need to happen over the next few weeks, months and years. Chaplains can offer suitable support to families by guiding them in ways to inspire them that things will and do get better. By offering prayer as one support mechanism and also by ensuring they continue to get support from medical professionals for their condition.

We will of course be here to support anyone with any queries or help they need. So do feel free to reach out should you require any further assistance or have any other ideas on how best to help the community.